

# Great Ape Conservation Fund



Apes, by their nature, are extremely vulnerable. They occur at very low densities, grow relatively slowly, are long-lived, have

low reproductive rates and complex social relationships. Today, all the world's great ape species are threatened with extinction.

In Asia, both orangutans and gibbons are facing a multitude of serious threats. Asia's only great ape species, the orangutan - found on the islands of Borneo and Sumatra - will be pushed to extinction if illegal logging, forest fires, poorly planned road construction, conversion of indigenous forests to plantations, draining of peat lands, and poaching continue unchecked. Stopping habitat loss and protecting remaining forests are essential to save this unique species.

Asia's lesser apes, the gibbons, are threatened by habitat loss, fragmentation and degradation, and hunting for food, medicine, and sport. This situation is made worse by the lack of effective sanctuaries for gibbons. Existing protected areas suffer from inadequate management, and poor enforcement of wildlife laws.

Africa's apes - gorillas, chimpanzees and bonobos - are also facing an arsenal of threats including hunting, habitat loss, an illegal pet trade, and disease outbreaks. These threats have combined to rapidly decimate populations. In 1960, more than one million chimpanzees populated the dense forests of Africa. Today, fewer than 200,000 survive in the wild and their numbers continue to fall.

Throughout West and Central Africa, gorillas, chimpanzees and bonobos are being hunted for food. The situation has been heightened as roads built for logging and mining operations have

allowed poachers access to previously remote forests, which once served as a protective refuges for apes. In villages where meat from domesticated animals is scarce and expensive, wild animals are hunted as a cheap and locally available source of protein. In cities, eating bushmeat has become a status symbol for the wealthy and the demand for wild meat has steadily increased.

Additionally, in the past few years, scientists documented a new and devastating threat to great apes disease. Recent outbreaks of hemorrhagic fevers, like Ebola, have reduced some ape populations to a fraction of their previous numbers, killing up to 90% of individuals in affected populations.

Apes are susceptible to many of the same diseases as humans. As growing human populations penetrate further into ape habitat, the potential for disease transmission between apes and people, and vice versa, is increasing. As a result, the bushmeat trade poses a serious health risk for humans.

In response to these many pressing threats, the U.S. Congress passed the Great Ape Conservation Act in 2000 which created the Great Ape Conservation Fund for conservation of gorillas, chimpanzees, bonobos, orangutans and gibbons. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service awards grants from the fund for activities and research related to infectious diseases, strengthening law enforcement, conservation education, safeguarding habitat and much more. With the help of this Act and many committed conservationists, there is hope that these animals will beat the odds of extinction.



**Top: Female Orangutan**

Dammer Saragih/OUREI

**Bottom: Silverback Gorilla**

Angelique Todd/WWF

*The Fiscal Year 2009 Congressional appropriation of \$2 million to the Great Apes Fund, was augmented by \$2.5 million from USAID's Central Africa Regional Program for the Environment (CARPE). These additional funds complement and support ape conservation in six Central African countries. Together with the 2009 appropriation, the Service has leveraged \$4.9 million in matching and in-kind funds to support 59 projects in Asia and Africa including the following vital efforts:*

- Ensuring the long-term survival of the Cross River gorilla by establishing new nature reserves such as the Kagwene Gorilla Sanctuary in Cameroon, assessing habitat suitability of potential corridors to link existing gorilla sites, updating current knowledge of gorilla population size, and raising community awareness and education.
- Coordinating a collaborative management program involving timber operators, government, and conservationists to curtail illegal hunting and greatly improve the status of apes and other wildlife within logging concessions surrounding Noua-bale Ndoki Park in the Republic of Congo.
- Supporting the development of a conservation corridor linking key chimpanzee habitats in Liberia and Cote d'Ivoire through an integrated program of conservation awareness, training, and species monitoring.
- Developing a coordinated strategy for improving the long-term conservation prospects of bonobos to implement a program of community outreach, habitat protection, species monitoring, and training.
- Improving the capacity of Gabon's park service to manage its system of protected areas through a program of direct assistance to train park rangers, managers, and other wildlife professionals.
- Strengthen protection, monitoring, management, and land-use planning for the yellow-cheeked crested gibbons of Cambodia's Seima Biological Conservation Area by continuing gibbon monitoring, raising the protection status of the area, preparing a draft management plan, and carrying out spatial and socio-economic planning.
- Monitoring orangutan and gibbon population densities and elements of forest structure and dynamics as early indicators of environmental change in the Sebangau Forest of Central Kalimantan, Indonesia, an ecosystem of global importance



**Yellow-cheeked crested gibbon**

Ben Rawson/CI

to orangutan conservation and carbon sequestration.

- Surveys and threat assessments for two priority orangutan landscapes of Ketapang District, West Kalimantan, Indonesia, followed by efforts to integrate the protection of these sites into district spatial and oil palm plantation management plans.
- Establishing a permanent, sustainable, state-of-the-art training program for rangers of Bukit Tigapuluh National Park, Sumatra, Indonesia, to strengthen the performance of the park's wildlife protection units and to strengthen orangutan protection in the park.



**Mountain gorilla** Richard Ruggiero/USFWS

Great Ape Conservation Funding History from 2005 through 2009	
Total Number of Grant Proposals Received	452
Total Number of Grants Awarded	265
Percentage of Countries with Great Apes Receiving Grants	100%
Total Amount Appropriated by U.S. Congress	\$8,108,157
Total Funds Distributed through Grants	\$17,835,000
Total Funds to Administration of Grants	\$457,259
Total Matching/In-kind Funds Leveraged by Grants	\$20,533,000

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